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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Joint written statement* submitted by the Union of Arab Jurists, Arab Organization for Human Rights, General Arab Women Federation, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development - VIDES, Nord-Sud XXI - North-South XXI, Organisation Mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale, Organisation pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de la Cooperation Economique Internationale - OCAPROCE Internationale, United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, Indian Council of South America (CISA), International Educational Development, Inc., International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM), World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[02 June 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Annual Full-Day Discussion on Women's Rights Women's Rights in Iraq* (**)

Women in Iraq had previous to the occupation made important advances compared to most countries in the region. Earlier laws ensured education for girls, family rights, and the right to serve in the government. However, present-day Iraq is plagued by insecurity, transforming the situation for women into a national crisis.

Displaced women and war widows

The government of Iraq did not undertake any effective measure to address the issues of around 5 million Iraqis displaced inside Iraq since 2003, out of which about 83 percent are women and children. They face strong social stigmas, discriminated and forced to live in inhumanely poor conditions. About 33% of displaced widowed women have not received any humanitarian assistance; 76% of widows do not receive a pension and sometimes are forced to go into temporary marriage with one of the bureaucrats who distribute the funds.[1]

Women in Iraqi prisons and detention facilities

Despite the annual report of the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights on the situation of prisons and detention centres in Iraq indicating the cases of torture and exposure to threats and rape of women,[2] nothing has been done by the Iraqi government to protect women's right. Sexual abuse as a method of torture against female prisoners is not confined to the notorious Abu Ghraib prison. Women are repeatedly subject to rape and sexual assault also in Iraqi detention centres. Former detainees reported that their clothing was removed and they were deprived of food and water for days.

According to our information from the ground, women were arrested by the security forces without showing an arrest warrant, then detained and interrogated about male family members without accusing those women of any crime, and demanding bribes for their release. The majority of women are used as a pressuring tool for their husbands, fathers, brothers or sons. Our findings indicate that many of these women described being beaten, kicked, slapped, hung upside-down and beaten on their feet, given electric shocks, and raped or threatened with sexual assault by security forces during interrogations. Security forces questioned them about their male relatives' activities rather than their own accused crimes, if any, and furthermore forced them to sign statements which they were not allowed to read.

The Iraqi criminal justice system tortures women into confessions, using horrendous measures including rape in front of their relatives and children. When finally charged and sentenced, the women are additionally abused, tortured and raped inside the detention facilities. The main issue at hand here is the huge failure by the courts to investigate allegations of abuse and hold the abusers responsible and accountable which encourages police and security forces to falsify confessions and continue the use torture and sexual assault.

Education

Throughout the past four years, the number of girls receiving primary education in Iraq has declined and the current government did not undertake necessary actions to improve the situation. Girls account for around 44.8% of students. This means that for every 100 boys enrolled in primary schools in Iraq, there are fewer than 89 girls. In most rural areas

* - This report prepared by Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)

[1] Dr.YasmineJawad (2013) at http://www.gicj.org/iraq_conference_speeches/Dr_Yasmin_Jawad_Presentation.pdf

[2] Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights (2012) in Arabic available at:
http://www.humanrights.gov.iq/uploads/ali%20pdf/final2012.pdf

of southern governorates with traditional attitudes fewer than half of girls are attending school. There are no regions in Iraq where the number of girls completing primary education is in any way acceptable. Some 75% of girls who start school have dropped out during, or at the end of, primary school and do not continue intermediate education. Unfortunately, the state of Iraq did not develop any strategy or action plan during 2010-2014 to address this social stigma, encourage and facilitation the education of girls. Poor attendance is typically attributed to security situation within Iraq which undoubtedly is a significant contributor to these figures. However, there are many ways the government could address this rapid decrease in numbers of girls attending school.

Political participation

Article 47 of the current Iraqi Constitution, which was applauded by women organizations and international community as one of the great achievements of the "New Iraq" for guaranteeing women 25% of the membership of the Council of Representatives, is not an indicator of ensuring women's participation in political life. This appraise is made disregarding the actual small difference it makes for Iraqi women in general and how it has been used as a sheer token to cover up the volume of crimes committed against women under occupation. Most female members of the parliament have shown little interest in women's rights but rather focus on representing their sectarian party's policies towards women. In essence, they duplicate whatever their fellow male MPs already advocate. The irony is that even this nominal step was neglected by the present government formed in 2010 and nothing was done to continue positive achievements.

Alarming rates of birth defects, cancer and infant mortality

Iraq is suffering from a high toxic level of lead, mercury contamination and depleted uranium pollution in many regions. Several studies show a high level of contamination by other toxic substances including Uranium lead and mercury.[3] An upsetting number of birth defects ranging from congenital heart defects to brain dysfunctions and malformed limbs are reported. There is also a huge number of miscarriages and cancer cases. According to gynaecologists, paediatricians and neurologists in Fallujah the numbers of these cases have been increasing rapidly since 2005. More disturbingly, they appear to be occurring at an increasing rate in children born in Fallujah. Similar defects have been found among children born in Basra. It seems that the government of Iraq is simply neglecting these developments as has no interest in it. It is the state obligation to ensure that the right of its citizens to health is protected and necessary conditions are created for that[4].

Cancer

In Fallujah, a dramatic increase of cancer and paediatric cancer rate is reported.[5] Studies indicate the variation of the incidence rate of cancer in the different areas of Fallujah region. The range of incidence rate is from 50-128 cases per 100,000, which is a fourfold increase of the cancer rate in the year of 2010 since 2004. [6] Forms of cancer are similar to

[3] Al-Sabbak, M., Sadik Ali, S., Savabi, O., Savabi, G., Dastgiri, S., &Savabieasfahani, M. (2012). Metal contamination and the epidemic of congenital birth defects in Iraqi cities. Bulletin of environmental contamination and toxicology, 89(5), 937–44. Alaani, S., Tafash, M., Busby, C., Hamdan, M., &Blaurock-Busch, E. (2011). Uranium and other contaminants in hair from the parents of children with congenital anomalies in Fallujah, Iraq. Conflict and health, 5, 15. Alaani, S., Tafash, M., Busby, C., Hamdan, M., &Blaurock-Busch, E. (2011). Uranium and other contaminants in hair from the parents of children with congenital anomalies in Fallujah, Iraq. Conflict and health, 5, 15.

[4] A study published in 2013 finds a rate of congenital anomalies at birth in Fallujah to be 11.5 times higher than the comparable rate in neighbouring Kuwait. Another study of 56 families in Fallujah, and a metal analysis of hair samples from them, shows public contamination with two well-known neurotoxic metals - lead and mercury used in the manufacture of present-day ammunition. Hair metal data from Fallujah showed lead to be five times higher in the hair samples of children with birth defects compared to children who appeared normal. Mercury was six times higher. Al-Sabbak, (2012), op.cit. Metal contamination and the epidemic of congenital birth defects in Iraqi cities. Bulletin of environmental contamination and toxicology, 89(5), 937–44.

[5] Fathi, R. A., Matti, L. Y., Al-salih, S., &Godbold, D. (2013). Environmental pollution by depleted uranium in Iraq with special reference to Mosul and possible effects on cancer and birth defect rates, (February 2014), 37–41.

[6] Al-faluji, A. A. R., Ali, S. H., & Al-esawi, A. A. J. (2012). Incidence of cancer in Fallujah above 10 years age with over view of common cancers in 2011. 4(9), 591–596.

those found among the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb survivors, who were exposed to intense radiation. The rate of leukaemia is 38 times higher, the childhood cancer rate is 12 times higher, and breast cancer is 10 times more common than in populations of Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait. Heightened levels of adult lymphoma and brain tumors are also observed. The is no governmental response to these issues.

Infant Mortality Rate

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is one of the most important indicators of health status and life quality. The rise of the IMR is attributed to dissatisfied hygienic requirements; and unfavourable environmental factors, economical conditions, environmental sanitation and medical care.[7] In Fallujah, the IMR rate is disturbingly - during 2010 and 2011 found to be 49.5/1000 live births and 48.27/1000 live births successively. It is high compared to that of other areas in Iraq and Iraq neighbour countries [8].

The government of Iraq does not undertake efficient actions to fulfil its international commitment to safeguard the right to health. According to Dr Omar Al-Kubaisy, prominent Iraqi cardiologist, the part of the state budget allocated to health, medical care, and education, which part does not exceed two or three percent of the total budget, is insufficient.[9] Moreover, there is a significant disregard of the first aid services, primary health care services, and health prevention, including maternity centres and immunisation programs for children. Also, financial and administrative corruption in the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the dependence on non-professional cadres that relies on sectarian affiliation and exclusion from medical care makes it more difficult. The breakdown and continued deterioration of health infrastructure and services such as providing clean water and electricity in hospitals, the lost control on pharmaceutical industry, contributes to a disastrous.[10]

Recommendations:

- The UN and the Human Rights Council to ensure that all human rights violations committed in Iraq to be investigated by an international independent body;
- The reinstatement of the position of a Special Rapporteur for Iraq.
- In order to ensure a reasonable level of healthcare, the international community and the Iraqi authorities should:
  - Make a thorough assessment of the healthcare situation in Iraq;
  - Ensure an environmental clean-up, undertaken and financed by those responsible for the use of depleted uranium and other toxic agents that are susceptible to the worrying increase of cancer and birth defects.

**Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), BRussels Tribunal, Arab Lawyers Association- UK, Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), The International League of Iraqi Academics (ILIA), The Iraqi Commission on Human Rights (ICHR), Women Will Association (WWA), Organization for Widows and Orphans (OWO), Ikraam Center for Human Rights, Belgian Peace Movement, Ligue camerounaise des droits de l'homme, Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq (MHRI), Women Solidarity for an Independent and Unified Iraq, Alliance to Renew Co-operation among Humankind, International Coalition against War Criminals (ICAWC), Medical Aid for the Third World, Association of Iraqi Diplomats (AID), The African Association of Human Rights (AAHR), Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World, Moroccan Association for the Right to a Fair Trial, Americans Against the War (France), General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), The International Action Center (IAC), American Worker,

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[7] Abdulghani, S. T., Hameed, A. A., &Alfayadh, Z. T. (2013). Causes and Differentials of Infant Mortality in the Pediatrics Wards in Fallujah General Hospital, 3(4), 1178–1186.

[8] Kuwait (7.87 deaths/1000 live births), Islamic Republic of Iran (41.11/1000 live births), Syria (15.12 deaths/1000 live births), Turkey (23.07 deaths/1000 live births), Jordan (15.83 deaths/1000 live births), Saudi Arabia (15.61 deaths/1000 live births).

[9] Dr Omar Al-Kubaisy : http://www.dhiqar.net/Art.php?id=33500

[10] Ibid

Association of Iraqi Intellectuals and Academics, The International Network of Arab Human Rights NGOs, America In Solidarity, Federacion De Mujeres Cubanas, Association of Victims of American Occupation Prisons, International Anti-Occupation Network (IAON), International Lawyers.org, International Society of Iraqi Scientists, The Perdana Global Peace Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War, Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for Iraq Sovereignty- CEOSI, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, El Taller International, World Courts of Women, Center for Development Studies- India, Wariscrime.org, Action Center for Justice, 1% A Peace Army.org, A Bigger Tent.org, Agir contre la guerre (France), American Voices Abroad (Berlin, Germany), American Voices Abroad Military Project (Europe), Anti War Fair, Arizona Christian Peacemakers, Armbands for Peace, Arms Against War, Artists Against the War, Backbone Campaign, Be the Change, Become Active, Bike for Peace (Germany), Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Bird Dogger Org., Children of Iraq Association (UK),Bloomington Peace Action Coalition (IN), Blue State News Only, Boston Mobilization, Bring Democracy Back, Bring Them Home,Butterfly Gardeners Association, Citizens for Accountability on Iraq, California for Democracy, Camp Casey Blog, Camp U.S. Strike for Peace Campaign, Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Canada Watch, Carolina Peace Resource Center (SC), Cartoon Free America, Catalysts of Hope, Central Colorado Coalition on the Iraq War, Chester County Peace Movement (PA), Cindy Sheehan Org., Cities for Peace, Citizens for Legitimate Government, Citizens for Peace & Justice, Human Rights for all-Morocco, Christian Clergy For Impeachment.com, Clothing of the American Mind, Coalition Against Election Fraud, Coalition for Impeachment Now (COIN), Code Pink, the Iraqi Association for Human Rights (IAHR), Al-Basa'er Media Association, Consumers for Peace.org, Dhafir Trial.org, DC Anti-War Network.org, Democracy Action, Democracy for America Meetup (Birmingham, AL), Olympia Citizens' Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney (WA), One Million Reasons, Operation Cease Fire, Operation Impeachment, Orange County Grassroots (CA), Out of Iraq, Out of Iraq Bloggers Caucus, Patrick Henry Democratic Club, Patriotic Pulse, Patriots for Gore, Peace Action, Peace Action Wisconsin, Peace and Accountability, Peace Drum, Peace Majority, Peace Movement Aotearoa (New Zealand), Peace Reso.org, Peninsula Peace and Justice Center (Palo Alto, CA), People's Campaign for the Constitution, People Powered Impeachment, People's Email Network, People's Glorious Five Year Plan, Picnic to Impeach, Pixel4Peace.org, Playing in Traffic, PledgeToImpeach.org, Political Cooperative, Politics and Art, Progressive Action Alliance, Progressive Action Center, Progressive Avenues, Progressive Democrats of America, Progressive Democrats of Hawaii Project Filibuster, Project for the OLD American Century, Refusing to Kill.org, Rescue Our Democracy, Sacramento for Democracy (CA), St Pete for Peace (FL), Sampsonia Way, San Diego for Democracy, School of the Americas Watch, Sheehan for Congress, South Florida Impeachment Coalition, South Mountain Peace Action (Maplewood & South Orange, NJ), Springs Action Alliance (CO), Stop the War Coalition (UK), Students for Impeachment, Students Towards a New Direction (STAND), Summit County Progressive Democrats (OH), The Known UnKnowns, The Politically Incorrect Cabaret, The Rational Response Squad, Think Blue Dems, Time for Accountability, Toronto Coalition to Stop the War (Canada), Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International, True Blue Liberal.org, Trumansburg Impeachment (NY), Truth Empowered, Truthtelling Project, UC Nuclear, Underground Action Alliance, Unitarian Universalist Peace and Justice Group (Nantucket, MA), United Blue USA, United for Veterans (Wayne, MI), United Progressives, Upbeat Defiance, US Peace Memorial, US Tour of Duty: Iraq Veterans and Military Families Demand the Truth, Velvet Revolution, Vet Gulf March, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, Veterans for Peace, Chapter 27, Virginia Grassroots Coalition, Voters for Peace, We the People for Peace, We the People Network, We the People Now, We The People United Bangladesh.org, Peace Surge, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (WA), Stop the War (UK), U.S. Peace Council, World Can't Wait.org, World Prout Assembly, Komite Internazionalista- Basque, Asociación Paz, Igualdad y Solidaridad Internacional, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, Málaga, Spain, Stop Fascism Action Network, The Asian Jurists Centre, Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRDI), The African Center for Human Rights (ACHR), Veterans for Peace, Your Declaration of Independence.org , Arab Lawyers Network-UK, Conservative Centre of Environmental & Reserves in Fallujah (CCERF), Willie Nelson Peace Research Institute, Studies Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, Association internationale des droits de l'homme, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement. 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